

To Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Hamilton City Councillors, and Hamilton Police Chief Eric Girt:

We, the undersigned, are trans and gender-diverse residents of Hamilton. We voted for you, we live in your city, we work in your city. We belong here, the same as anyone else, no matter who they may be. Recent events in the city have left us feeling unwanted and unwelcome by you as our elected and chosen leadership. Collectively, we are angry, frustrated, and hurt by your choices of action, including your choice of inaction.

The flashpoint for our anger is, of course, the violence at Hamilton Pride 2019. We are angered not only by the alt-right bigots trying to attack our celebration; we are angered more by Hamilton Police's decision not to defend our vulnerable trans and queer population from these attacks. You were given advance notice as to when and where the alt-right Pride protest would be taking place; you did not listen. When violence occurred, when we and our allies were being beaten, **you** stood aside and watched. You only moved in when we dared to defend ourselves and fight back, and you escorted the alt-right protestors out of Gage Park. **Hamilton Police cared more about protecting the rights of bigoted, hateful speech by the alt-right than it cared about protecting the bodies and lives of trans and queer people peacefully celebrating.** If not for the actions by trans and queer people and our allies, there would have been nothing holding back the alt-right from invading the actual premises of the Pride event and committing further violence. As it stands, the bigots tried to attack several members of our community (including children and youths) leaving Pride. **You** chose to let them go free. **You did not defend us or our rights as Hamilton residents.**

Do not forget either that the current status of Pride is due to your cowardice. You have failed to confront the alt-right groups mobilizing in Hamilton; you have let them publicly demonstrate on City of Hamilton property for over two years. During this time, neither the city, nor its leadership, nor Hamilton Police, have taken any effort to stop these alt-right groups from fraternizing, or demonstrating in public spaces. Their demagoguery is hateful and hurtful. It is not Charter-protected speech, and by allowing it to continue **you have failed us as residents of Hamilton once again.** Hamilton Pride no longer includes a march because you have given the space to the alt-right protestors instead. We are unwilling to appear tolerant of their hate in any way or form, and we cannot march to celebrate our identities in front of a background of bigotry.

These events are just the most recent in your demonstrated unwillingness to make Hamilton a safe space for us as trans residents. Your administration lost a Human Rights Tribunal case when you tried to ban a trans woman from using her chosen washroom on city property; as part of the settlement, you agreed to write and publish a new non-discrimination policy against trans and gender diverse residents. Years later, that policy is still delayed and inadequate: **you have shown that you do not care about our rights as residents of Hamilton.** Instead, you have employed and kept employed Marc Lemire, a publicly admitted Neo-Nazi; when his employment was discovered the city began an "investigation." **If being publicly hateful towards marginalized, oppressed peoples in Hamilton is not grounds for immediate dismissal, what is?** We told you that we were uncomfortable flying the queer and trans Pride flags at City Hall while Lemire was still employed. You disregarded our wishes as a community and held a flag raising anyway, disgracing the power and symbolism of our Pride flags and creating hollow, fake, performative allyship for yourselves.

When your own LGBTQ advisory committee members spoke up about your hurtful actions, you tried to dismiss them to avoid any criticism. When that same committee held a public meeting to discuss your shameful treatment of queer residents in Hamilton, you attended in full police uniform and attempted to intimidate the speakers. You complained that you were denied a recruiting booth at Hamilton Pride, and insinuated that your own officers did not defend us because you felt hurt by that denial. We refuse your privilege and attempts to claim our spaces. You do not decide who is allowed to have a booth at Pride; the queer and trans community of

Hamilton does. That same community attempted to create a dialogue with you and come to an agreement about police participation in Pride, but you refused to participate. No matter how much your feelings might be hurt, **you have a responsibility to defend and protect the residents of Hamilton. You failed us. You did not do your job, and your petulance is no excuse.**

As a result of Hamilton Police actions, Cedar Hopperton, a member of Hamilton's trans community, was incarcerated in a Milton prison for approximately a month. She was incarcerated because she spoke up against your inaction, because she called Hamilton Police out for not protecting trans and queer people against violence. The role and responsibility of the police in Canadian society is to protect and defend people in Canada against violence and aggression. Instead of protecting trans people, you have arrested queer community members trying to defend us against bigoted violence; you have used your institutions as tools to commit more bigoted violence and to criminalize our dissent.

Mayor Eisenberger, you have repeatedly attacked and derided the members of our community as "fake queers." You have singled out anarchists and activists as not belonging to the queer and trans communities in Hamilton. You are wrong. **You do not decide who belongs to our communities; we do.** Anarchists and activists are the lifeblood of the trans community in Hamilton, and they have dedicated their lives to defending and advocating for us for much longer and much more effectively than you have. Instead, Mayor Eisenberger, you have refused to listen to the trans community (especially trans women), and have surrounded yourself in private meetings with trusted advisors. We see you. We see your refusal to address us squarely. We know you haven't ever attended Hamilton Pride. And we see that the anarchists and the activists are the real defenders of the trans community in Hamilton, the real people working to keep us safe. **We reject your politics, and return to solidarity with our siblings.** We speak on behalf of our entire community, as your policies have made many of us feel unsafe and unable to speak up for ourselves publicly.

As residents of Hamilton, we demand the following actions be immediately taken as a starting point in order to make Hamilton safe once again for trans and gender-diverse people:

- Incarceration is inhumane and we demand the immediate withdrawal of all charges against and release from custody for the trans and queer community defenders you have arrested. Conversely, Hamilton Police Services needs to begin pressing charges against the alt-right combatants at Hamilton Pride, towards rehabilitation and meaningful change, not traumatic incarceration.
- An independent arms-length investigation must be made into Hamilton Police Services' actions regarding Hamilton Pride 2019, the alt-right demonstrations at City Hall, and related events.
- The City of Hamilton must take action to prevent alt-right protestors on city property, and needs to develop a strategy to stop such hateful groups from existing in our city. This strategy must not be used to criminalize or repress trans and queer communities and activists within Hamilton.
- The City must release and commit to its non-discrimination policy against trans and gender diverse residents.
- Mayor Eisenberger and Police Chief Girt, we have no faith in your ability to lead our community out of this trauma. You both need to immediately resign in order for us to move on.

The trans community is done with your lack of leadership. We need better.

Signed By:

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